

# MAHATMA GANDHI

( *A dialogue in understanding* )

By

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN the preparation of this work, I should gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from a friend whose outlook and ideals are embodied in Chetan, who is a leading character in this dialogue.

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Cumballa Hill,  
Bombay*

## CHARACTERS

1	ALFRED EDEN	<i>An English Professor</i>
2	CHETAN	<i>An Indian Professor</i>
3	SUSHIL	<i>A Professor of Sanskrit</i>
4	SURENDRA	<i>An Indian Liberal</i>

[ *All Characters in this dialogue are imaginary They are created with the object of representing different points of view on the subject Nobody should identify himself with any character even if by chance the description fits him* ]

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**MR ALFRED EDEN** *Mr Alfred Eden is an official attached to the Secretariat of the League of Nations. In connection with his duties this year he has undertaken to study the political situation in India and to ascertain how far developments in India under Mr Gandhi will help or hinder the solution of world problems as they confront the League. He has just arrived and is meeting by previous appointment in the Bombay University Library Mr Chetan whose reputation has already reached him of Geneva as a typical representative of Indian thought and aspirations.*

*Mr Alfred Eden is an Englishman. His appearance attracts attention. Tall in stature, with gray hair, penetrating eyes and a prominent forehead he looks an embodiment of culture and humanity. Absorbed in the wider problems associated with his work he is indifferent to his clothes. He is ready to listen and understand but also ready to argue and to urge his own point of view. Born in affluent circumstances, brought up in conservative traditions and outlook, he was educated at an English public school and had a brilliant career at Oxford, where he took a first class in Modern Greats. His academic achievements obtained for him a Fellowship which he utilised in completing his scholarship. He travelled in the East and acquainted himself with the attitudes and thought of India and China. He*

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had already roamed at large over the Greek Classics, European History and Political Philosophy. With this background it is not unnatural that he should have developed a wider outlook. His attainments easily secured for him a Professorship of Political Science in one of the Universities, where he taught the subject for a number of years, moulding the minds of undergraduates and creating in them the desire for a better social and political order. He was keenly interested in the great social, economic and political problems that faced Europe before the war, dreaming of a prosperous world, increasingly linked by commercial and economic ties and offering the foundations of a cultural unity in which the nations of the world would cooperate in the free exchange of ideas and ideals. He soon rose in the esteem of his colleagues in the academic world, and came to be recognised as an authority on international problems.

Then followed the war, shattering his dreams as it shattered the dreams of many others, the orgy of hatred, the atmosphere of suspicion and fear, and diplomatic lies and half truths for generating the fury of combat—the products in a sense of continuous contact with the sight of blood and the prospect of death—left him sad and disillusioned. Four years of these horrors—and then the Peace and the Covenant of the League of Nations—inaugurating as so many believed a new order among the States which had rushed headlong to ruin in 1914—the realisation to some of a dream of peace and goodwill among the nations of the world. Mr Alfred Eden restless under the agonies of the world situation sought a new sphere of activity, where he might make himself useful in contributing his share to the making of a new era. He was offered a responsible position in the League Secretariat and he accepted it. He threw himself into this work with heart and soul, helping among other things the work of the committee

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for International Intellectual Cooperation Mr Alfred Eden soon found that whilst the intellect slowly builds up its instruments of cooperation, human emotions and passions use them for the purpose of hatred and discord. He realised that the League of Nations in fact did not desire the driving force of the World's intellectual leaders. The process of his disillusionment was intensified by the growth of armaments, by militant economic nationalism, the successful defiance of the Covenant of the League by some of the very members of the League, and the practice of naked militarism for purposes of expansion.

Sad and disillusioned, he could not yet abandon his dreams of a new world. Though Geneva could not be the goal, the journey must continue. Realising that one of the vital factors in the establishment of a new world order is the peaceful solution of the problem of India, he is attracted to a closer study of the Indian question and feels the urge to see things for himself and understand the living history and surging activities of the country, now struggling for freedom under the influence and leadership of Mr Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and also under the increasing influence of socialistic ideas. He has come out to India with the hope that this land of the Rishis may point the way to a new world order where Geneva had failed.

**MR CHETAN** Mr Chetan is a young Professor, with a brilliant academic career in the Bombay University. He has already published works which have attracted attention both in India and abroad. Brought up in an Indian village, inheriting the culture and traditions of his country, he prosecuted his studies in an upcountry urban centre and completed them at the University. Rooted in India's past, his mind stored with the historical and cultural riches of his country, he has absorbed in the course of his studies the currents and

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forces of modern times. He is widely read in European politics and world economics. Hence his approach to the Indian problem is based on a broader outlook, accepting India as a part of the world. He has travelled widely on the Continent and in England and has had opportunities of contact and exchange of ideas with the leading intellectuals of the West. These experiences, whilst widening his outlook and broadening his sympathies, have strengthened his convictions as regards the possible solution of his country's problems. Mr Chetan has deeply rooted convictions about what he regards as the welfare of his country. He has been profoundly influenced by what he saw in the West of the possibilities of a prosperous and happy life for the masses, built on scientific appliances and inventions. He is distressed at the contrast between the standards of life in the West and the ways of living in his own country, of the millions dragging out a miserable existence on the barest minimum, and in his eager desire to bring the possibilities of a better life within reach of his countrymen he often lets his optimism run in advance of the brute facts of social conservatism and inertia which surround him.

Mr Chetan has never been associated with active politics. He has been for years moulding the minds of the younger generation in the cast of his own ideas and ideals.

Mr Chetan is 36 years old, thin and wiry, with sharply outlined features, a broad forehead and penetrating eyes. He is intensely emotional, and yet can restrain himself in the expression of his sentiments. In common with his race he has a keen and subtle intellect. As in the case of other intellectuals there is a conflict of loyalties within him—a conflict between what he has inherited and imbibed and what he has acquired and assimilated through his education and imagination. There is a conflict in him between the idealism that



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*he has caught from his culture and heritage and from the class room and the hard headedness acquired by contacts with the men and manners around him. Whilst he is highly imaginative and earnest about the promotion of his country's welfare, the student and the artist in him dominate over the impulses to action. He is impatient with himself and feels helpless in the matter of promoting the interests of his country, which is rooted in a rigid social order that makes political and economic progress difficult of rapid achievement. He has become prematurely disillusioned. And yet, at times the idealism within him gets the better of the hard headedness and realistic outlook fostered by his travels and environment.*

*[After exchanging greetings conversation between Alfred Eden and Chetan begins.]*

MR ALFRED EDEN I am glad that we have met. I have come to your country to study your political problem—Gandhi's India. I am here in Bombay for eight days, and during my stay I should like to discuss with you this problem in all its aspects. I hope you will find time to help me.

MR CHETAN I shall be glad to help you in understanding my country's problem.

MR ALFRED EDEN May I state my difficulty? The great problem before your country is to take a wise corporate decision at every step of your country's political and economic evolution. To my mind the great problem of our age is to know the technique by which we can arrive at wise decisions. Our capitalist civilisation has brought us to a crisis, and our statesmen are being called upon to mould and formulate a policy based upon the experience of the ages and the scientific resources of more recent times. Today we find reason dethroned everywhere. But it is wise planning based upon reason and the experience of the

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past which is the only method of dealing with our political and social problems. We must remember that rationality, far from being an original endowment of man, the gift of a merciful providence, has been painfully achieved and acquired by humanity through a long drawn process of trial and error with all the attendant sufferings. Is not humanity going to benefit by the accumulated and rationalised experience which it has acquired at such a heavy cost? I am actually distressed to find that reason is increasingly unheeded in the West during recent years, and I am afraid your country also is not open to the voice of reason.

MR. CHETAN Why do you say so?

MR. ALFRED EDEN Consider for a moment the attitude that is taken up by your Gandhi. He believes only in the inner voice of conscience and claims to be solely guided by it in the momentous issues of life. Whenever an important decision has to be taken, he says "In such matters reason has no place at all. I will trust to my inner voice." I confess it is difficult for me to understand any one like Gandhi dealing with the fortunes of millions and claiming to arrive at decisions by the whisperings of an inner voice, which because it is mystic is different from the cold, calculating plodding struggling light of human reason and the guidance afforded by the past. Rational purpose is of the essence of human action. It is true that men may have acted originally on a basis of instinct, and it is also true that they may continue to act with the help of instinctive tendencies. In every group there is a basis of instinct which constitutes the foundation for rational purposive thought and action. But as the conscious life of every individual lies beyond his reflex action so in a group whether it is a family, or a

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community or a nation, there is a corporate tradition, formed by a rational process and handed from one generation to another. This is achieved by the process of education in which laws with their sanctions, religion with its precepts and taboos, language and literature, and the system of education play a vital part. If the trend of modern social institutions is increasingly in the direction of democracy and if democracy is a process of creating new energy through the cooperative activities of citizens in every day life, what place can one assign in this process to the authority of a single will whose decisions are the products of an inner voice, and whose appeal rests on undiscerning faith in the correctness of its verdict? Do you really believe that the complicated political problems of your country—take for example the problem of untouchability, or the Hindu Muslim problem—can be solved by the oracular pronouncements of your Gandhi evolved from the subjective promptings of a sleepless night and a high strung temperament?

MR CHETAN When you stated that my country is not open to the voice of reason in the context I understand you to mean that my country is not reasonable in not settling her political problem on a reasonable basis with the United Kingdom. But you are confining your remarks to Gandhiji who is still as prominent a figure in the political field as ever before.

MR ALFRED EDEN Yes I know that though for the last two years he has been devoting his entire energies to the work of uplifting the Harijans he still dominates the political situation. Hence any solution of your country's problem must take into account Gandhi and his programme. I can concede the possibility that our intellectual leaders in the West may mislead instead of lead the people by an

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appeal to their sentiments and emotions. But I can never conceive the possibility of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announcing over the Radio on the eve of taking a great decision that he would observe a period of silence for twenty-four hours and decide on the promptings of the still small voice within him. How would the world fare, if on an occasion like the Disarmament Conference the leaders of the nations assembled in solemn conclave for deliberation proclaimed their intention, each for himself, to follow the inner voice, and came to a decision wholly different from that of his neighbours? The West has never understood Gandhi, and I want your help in enabling me to appreciate or at least to understand, this great personality, who represents India to the world. I should like to know how he arrives at his decisions.

MR CHETAN Let me try to explain. You will have to be patient with me. Wise decisions on any given occasion depend upon the nature of the occasion, the circumstances under which the decision is taken, the whole background of values in which the individual taking the decision has been brought up, and the object to be achieved under the given circumstances. The judgments that we pass on our decisions are largely dependent on the social and philosophical background which constitutes our heritage.

MR ALFRED EDEN Value is an ethical term. What do you mean by values? Do you mean the desires by which we are actuated from time to time and which may be as various as the individuals who entertain them?

MR CHETAN No. I am using the term values to mean absolute ends, the ideas and ideals which we have been brought to believe in as intrinsic "goods".

MR ALFRED EDEN I understand.

MR CHETAN To continue in the case of India, what are

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wise political decisions at a given point of time depend upon the object one desires to achieve at the time, having regard to all the circumstances, social, political and economic which constitute our environment. Gandhiji takes his decision, having regard to the object he has in view and the circumstances in which he finds the country. He has an amazing sense of reality. His single eye enables him to disregard all conflicting and sectional interests, which would ordinarily influence or prejudice other leaders. His codowmeot, his heritage and the racial memory which expresses itself through every public utterance and throughout his whole life, are combined in him with the benefits of a western education and a remarkable understanding of the needs of our country from day to day. He knows the weaknesses and the limitations as much as the strength and the potentialities of the people. He has a rare insight into the working of the mass mind of India. He is a dreamer and an idealist, and yet at the same time has a keen sense of reality and acuteness of mind that enable him to follow every passing phase in the working of the mind of the nation. The saint and the seer are combined in his life with the practical instincts of a shrewd businessman and a remarkable power of judging and penetration.

MR ALFRED EDEN This is all interesting but you have not yet been able to explain to me how this frail personality speaking in terms of your country's past is going to solve the complex problems that confront you today, leave aside the claim that is sometimes made that Mr Gandhi has something to contribute to the solution of the larger problems of the civilized world.

MR CHETAN Let me first say that India's ability to contribute to the solution of world problems or to solve her own problems by wise decisions under the leadership

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to the knowledge available to the mind. Very often it has to be rejected as inconsistent with the established body of knowledge available to the mind. But sometimes it is a new discovery, and the voyage of discovery may be pursued on some occasions in the daytime, unconsciously during sleep, on others in the half-conscious state which precedes or follows sleep. Is this not characteristic of all "inspiration?" It is in this sense that Gandhi's decisions may be said to be inspired. He has disciplined his body and his mind for years. His endowment, his racial heritage, his education and his wide experience of men and manners have taught him to build for his beliefs and impulses a structure of reasoning which often appears full of contradictions. But his disciplined mind does not work by conscious logical processes. Perhaps what really finds expression through him is a continuous racial memory that has lived in us for thousands of years.

MR ALFRED EDEN But all this is not quite clear. It may be that some persons have an insight and take right decisions. But what is the process? If you imply that a deep and accurate knowledge of a given set of circumstances may enable a person to take a right decision, this is not a decision taken on instinct or intuition. Do we not see in the world today, the dethronement of reason when the instincts of fear and suspicion and jealousy lead nations to build up tariff walls and armaments, whilst their reason makes them offer a lip loyalty to international friendship and disarmament? Is not what Mr Gandhi is doing what Tolstoy did in Russia? To trust to one's instinct is to destroy the very foundations of society. And may it not be that such a cult may ultimately lead to the materialism of a Bolsheviki type?

MR CHETAN You may be justified in your apprehensions

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Undoubtedly there is much in common between Gandhiji and Tolstoy. Both believed in the Ruskinian doctrines of the simplification of wants and the return to manual labour. Both treated modern ideas of progress with scorn, and neither hesitated to repudiate science and mechanization. For both the life of the peasant was the model of excellence, and the poverty that was honoured by both was the poverty, not of the factory worker but of the agricultural labourer. But there is no danger for Gandhiji at any rate that the movement with which he is identified will ever degenerate into materialism. It may be that the stress that he is laying on the poverty of the people, and therefore on the economic aspect of the problem that faces the country, may lead the country, under economic stress and in a period of chaos and confusion, into seeking salvation in the simple terms of a new economic order which does not look beyond material comforts. A grinding poverty often works out its remedy in the worship of material possessions. Our only hope lies in the fact that a country with such a long spiritual heritage will not lose its faith in the things of the spirit.

MR ALFRED EDEN Only the future will reveal this. But how do you account for the fact that whilst the civil disobedience movement has failed, Gandhiji still exercises an unparalleled hold over the mind and imagination of the masses in India?

MR CHITAN To enable you to understand the hold of Gandhiji over the masses in India it is necessary for me to put before you in a cursory manner the outlying features of Indian History during the last 150 years. On the death of Aurangzeb the mighty empire of the Moguls broke up and by 1761 it survived only as a shadow without substance. The provincial governors set themselves up as independent

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rulers, and began fighting with one another. The Maharathas were busy consolidating their power, the Rajputs were not strong enough. The Sikhs had not gathered sufficient strength. There was no strong central authority to take the place of the Mogul Rulers. A vacuum was created in the political life of India. The opportunity was missed by the Hindus. The vacuum was filled in by the British. They came to trade, but remained to govern. Between 1757 and 1857 they brought practically the whole of British India under their control. Up to 1870 the Government was mainly occupied with consolidating its power and maintaining law and order. The early years of British rule in India were marked by a willing submission and acceptance on the part of the people, it was an efficient police state which maintained order and preserved peace. People were just settling down and had neither the equipment nor time to apply their mind to the problems of government. From 1870, with the spread of higher education some Indians began to question the blessings of British rule. They used the English language, and educated Indians, steeped in Victorian literature, nourished in the teachings of Burke and Macaulay and J S Mill applied the principles they learnt to the working of the bureaucratic government in India. The Indian National Congress formed in 1885 a liberal rather than a nationalist body, believed in the principles of justice and fairplay which, they hoped, would lead Great Britain in the fullness of time out of her own wisdom to grant freedom to India. There was soon a change in the opinion of the educated classes—a sense of disillusionment, intensified by the spread of education when it appeared that India's freedom had to be won by a strenuous struggle. With leaders like Tilak and Lajpatrai



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the Indian movement became increasingly nationalist. The partition of Bengal in 1905 led to terrorism and dacoities. The Morley-Minto Reforms endeavoured to introduce an element of representation in the legislatures. The new temper that was brought to the East by the victories of Japan over Russia heightened India's national self-consciousness. When the War of 1914 broke out India placed her men and her resources at the disposal of Britain. Great Britain was touched by this spontaneous manifestation of loyalty. Promises of freedom were held out. The war was fought, it was said, for conferring on every nation the right of self-determination. The war ended with another period of disillusionment for India. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms failed even remotely to satisfy Indian aspirations. The Muhammadans alienated by the partition of the Turkish Empire made common cause with the Hindus. To cope with the increasing unrest Government passed the Rowlatt Act which aimed at curtailing the civil liberties of the people.

MR ALFRED EDEN Where was Mr Gandhi at this time?

MR CHETAN It was exactly at this time in 1919 after the passing of the Rowlatt Act that Gandhiji stepped into the forefront of the political arena. The Congress had already lost the moderate element by the secession of the Liberals in 1919—a group of able men, but men without a following. Gandhiji's first essay in leadership was the proclamation of a nation-wide *hartal*, and when the events that followed in the Punjab led to the shooting and the wounding of the people under the martial law regime Gandhiji was appointed sole dictator by the Congress and he inaugurated the now familiar movement of non-violent non-cooperation. He had already successfully worked Satyagraha as an instrument in South Africa for gaining his objective, and be

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was now prepared to use the same method on an infinitely larger scale and as a mass movement for obtaining redress for India's wrongs. It was a call not so much for passive resistance as for a search for truth—Satyagraha—and therefore a refusal to cooperate with that which in his view represented untruth and unrighteousness. He had derived his ideas from Thoreau, Tolstoy and the Sermon on the Mount and strengthened them from the teachings of the Gita. He had even put this into operation in India when under his advice the cultivators of Kaira had refused to pay the land assessment, and won in the end by patiently bearing the consequences of such refusal. And now after the martial law regime in the Punjab he asked the country to surrender titles and badges of honour, to abstain from sharing in social functions, to withdraw their children from Government Institutions, and their moneys from Government investments, establish arbitration tribunals of their own and refuse Government protection, to refrain from using British goods, and to withdraw from the public services. And the method by which all this was to be accomplished was the method of non violence, *Ahimsa*. According to him violence is the method of the Western revolutionaries, the inevitable accompaniment of a civilisation that had driven God out of its daily life and confined him to the church. Man had to be lifted out of the beast, and the upward urge of life in man was to be made manifest by the ability to love, never to injure, a living opponent. Buddha had proclaimed this truth—it had been the foundation of Jainism. It had been handed down to Brahmanism and universalised throughout the country. The call of Gandhiji sounded like a call of one of their great prophets. It was the voice of India's past speaking through the mouth of one of her

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sons who in his simplicity of life and in his sharply chiselled day-to-day utterances symbolised one of the long succession of Rishis

MR. ALFRED EDEN. But I cannot understand why for the sake of redressing grievances Gandhi should have resorted to such a heroic remedy.

MR. CHETAN I am afraid I have not made myself clear. The step was only an expression of the desperate resolve of a people who had lost all hope of getting their wrongs redressed by methods of constitutional agitation. The country had lost all faith in the good intentions of a government for which the people had given their lives and out of the lavishness of their poverty. The measure of despair may be gauged by the surrender of his knighthood by India's great apostle of world peace and cooperation. Tagore had for years striven for understanding between the East and the West in the shady groves of Bholpur. He felt that a disarmed and resourceless population had suffered a degradation that was not fit for human beings. It was this sense of his helplessness and despair that constituted the background of the new phase of India's political evolution on which the country entered under the leadership of Gandhiji.

MR. ALFRED EDEN You have sufficiently acquainted me with the historical background but now I want to know the sources of Gandhi's influence and leadership.

MR. CHETAN You will have to be a little patient with me when I endeavour to explain to you the sources of his influence over the mass of the population and his significance in the making of the new India of tomorrow. In the first place you must remember that, whereas the leaders of Indian public opinion and the makers of Indian life who preceded Gandhiji were steeped in Western history and

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to come closer to him and touch his feet, and probably believing they had attained their salvation if the old man gave his blessings and addressed a few words of solace to them. One recalls to mind in those early days of the Non cooperation Movement of 1930 the scenes which happened from day to day in a city like Bombay,—masses of brave Gujaratis and Maharathas and Sikhs and Rajputs squatted on the ground, refusing to move, bearing with patience the abuses and the bludgeonings of the police who were ordered to disperse them, sometimes bleeding without uttering a word of complaint, offering not an iota of resistance. And these men who suffered thus in patience were men who belonged to some of the most warlike races of India, with the traditions of aggressive retaliation and militarism permeating their very blood and tissues. It was a sight for the gods, this sudden conversion of thousands,—the lions of yesterday changed into docile lambs, bearing in the name of love the blows of a civilized government.

The real cause of this sudden transformation is not difficult to grasp. It lay in the unspotted crystal pure personality of the new leader. In India religion still dominates the mind of the masses. The great gift of the East is its sense, and ever present sense, of the Eternal. From the dim ages of a remote past the aspiring human heart has found the fulness of light in the person of the Yogi who has, by a strict discipline of the senses, acquired a power of self-detachment which gives him mastery over his physical and social environment. The Yogi alone can live the life of joy which his love enables him to live—a love that transcends the love of our fellowmen—in a sense of harmony that makes the Yogi one with the life of nature,—the world soul that speaks to him in the familiar

language of the blossoming flower, the rushing stream, the longing hilltops, and in the upward urge of mother earth in the green grass and the shooting plant. Dharma for the Indian is cosmic and universal. It is the inner essence, the law of every object in nature, animate or inanimate, which urges it to seek its fulness and harmony in the life of the organic whole. In Gandhiji the Indian discovered or rediscovered his idol of the ages, the Yogi who had sublimated his passions by self discipline and had by his detachment from the environment acquired a sense of fearlessness, which made him voluntarily face death itself in the realisation of his objective. Where fear dwells, love departs. The two can never subsist together. Gandhiji was the impersonation of the ancient Indian conception of love that knew no fear.

MR ALFRED EDEN This is all very interesting. But how can you expect this mystic to handle your political problems successfully?

MR CHETAN This is exactly the problem which I am struggling to make you understand. Gandhiji appeals to his countrymen through his spiritual qualities. He has all the qualities that can make an individual a leader. Simplicity, utter sincerity, earnestness of purpose, personal magnetism, a burning desire to seek truth and to live truth are combined in him with practical commonsense, a keen judgment, and a profound sense of humour such as a Yogi alone can possess through his power of detachment. Let me analyse this great personality at closer quarters.

In appearance he is not striking. A clean shaven head, a frail body, with thin arms and legs, scarcely 5 ft 6 ins in height, weighing in good health not more than 100 pounds, with a mouth almost toothless, a large nose and larger

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constitutes the very essence of his life as a saint and a teacher. His life is a prolonged search for truth, the overcoming of all prejudices and emotions and appetites which clog and dim the clear vision of the soul. It was his utter sincerity that led him to call off the Civil Disobedience Campaign in 1922 when the Chauri Chaura incident opened his eyes to the dangers of mass Civil Disobedience. The historic "confession" of February 1922 bears striking testimony to the greatness of this lover of truth. "If we are not to evolve violence out of non violence" he observed "we must hastily retrace our steps, and re establish an atmosphere of peace, and not think of starting mass Civil Disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained. Let the opponent glory in our humiliation and so called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice than to be guilty of denial of our oath and sin against God. But even more striking than the confession of 1922 was the confession of April 1934 when after having led the whole country into a campaign of non violent non cooperation lasting over nearly four years—save for the brief period of truce following upon the Gandhi Irwin pact—he was obliged to call off the movement. After having enlisted the cooperation of some of the finest souls of young India—men and women of all ranks and classes and after having cleansed their lives through the agonies of lathi charges and the hardships of prison life, he had once again to confess that he had made a mistake, because no one was fit to carry on the Movement except himself. No one could have felt the acuteness of the agony underlying this confession as keenly as the author of the confession himself, knowing as he did that there were hundreds of disinterested souls still living mutilated lives beyond and behind the prison

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walls because they had responded to his call and done his bidding. The world has never so far witnessed the triumph of truth in such tragic nakedness as in this deliberate sacrifice of hundreds, if not thousands, of disillusioned lives!

MR ALFRED EDEN. But you have not yet spoken to me of this doctrine of non-violence and love.

MR CHETAN. I am coming to it presently. On the basis of truth he evolved a few fundamental principles of life which he has sought to live for himself and to preach unto the world as the gospel of salvation. Chief amongst these was his teaching of "Ahimsa". Non-violence for Gandhiji is an ideal, a goal of human evolution to which we are moving unconsciously. It is love—the old Indian view of Ahimsa—the absence of ill will against everything that lives. It embraces even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects and beasts. As love he sees it in the Bible, in the Koran, in the teachings of every saint and seer. It is Dharma, the law of man's being, of human evolution; nay it is of the essence of ultimate reality. But imperfect as we are today it is not an achievement—it is the object of our endeavours, the good to activity, and ideal that is to be increasingly realised through pain and effort and suffering. His love for India makes him demand that his country should repudiate violence as something unworthy, and be ready to suffer and sacrifice herself. Her claim to a separate national existence rests on non-violence. "If India made violence her creed", he says, "I will not care to live in India. She would cease to evoke any pride in me. My patriotism is subservient to my religion. I cling to India like a child to its mother's breast, because I feel that she gives me the spiritual nourishment I need. If she were to fail me, I would feel like an orphan, without

hope of ever finding a guardian Then the snow altitudes of the Himalayas must give what rest they can to my bleeding soul "

MR. ALFRED EDEN. But do you seriously believe that this doctrine of non-violence can be worked in the sphere of our political life? Have the sufferings of the non-cooperators brought about a change of heart in the British Bureaucracy or the Secretary of State for India?

MR. CHETAN Let me state Gandhiji's own views in the matter. "To expect the whole mass of men and women to obey the law of non cooperation is not to know its working " But he believes that, given true workers, a limited measure of its application can be realised in respect of vast masses of people within a short time But true workers may be difficult to find and the prolongation of the struggle for freedom in India is to be attributed not to the unbending character of the English nature, but to the weaknesses of our own non violent men who have intended harm and have, many of them, postponed the date of freedom, whilst professing non violence The dynamic force behind the movement is to be "the silent propaganda carried on by the sufferings of the innocent victims of a civilized Government " If we believe in non-violent non cooperation "we are bound to believe that the British people are not unamenable to the force of affection " If the country, therefore, failed, the failure was not due to the weakness of the principle, it was due much more to the weakness of those who used the weapon without realising their responsibilities But if Ahimsa and Love are absolute values, why judge them by their failure or success?

MR. ALFRED EDEN. But is not Mr Gandhi himself at times asking us to judge the principle by its success? I have a paragraph from his writings May I show it to you?



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MR CHETAN Yes!

MR ALFRED EDEN "We can succeed beyond all expectation, only if we remain non violent in thought, word and deed. It need not be our final creed, but it must be our present creed for the attainment of our goal." How can he speak of the absolute worth of Love, and talk in the same breath as if love were only an expedient of a temporary character for the attainment of a specific purpose?

MR CHETAN You are raising a difficult issue. I have endeavoured to convey to you my interpretation of Gandhiji's message of Ahimsa. It is true he admits the possibility of the use of Ahimsa as a method of policy. "Non violence may succeed, even if it is adopted as a matter of policy rather than creed, if it is combined with real love for the country or the cause." "A right act is right whether done for policy or for its own sake." All non cooperators are not perfect beings. If we are all perfect there would be no occasion for non cooperation.

Let us remember the circumstances in which Gandhiji started the non cooperation movement. He honestly believed that British rule in its present form had not proved a blessing to the country. India is poorer in wealth in manliness and in godliness. Fifty years of constitutional agitation by the machinery of the law had failed to bring about a change in the situation. He saw in his country a nation without arms. Where the choice lay between cowardice and violence he unhesitatingly advised violence. Non violence did not mean for him meek submission to the will of the evil doer but the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the wrongdoer. The use of this soul force implies suffering. It was the ancient law of sacrifice that he was preaching. The Rishis of old had realised the futility of the use of arms, and taught a weary world

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that salvation lay through non-violence. Faced with the problem of winning freedom for India Gandhi was seeking for the means to achieve it. Constitutional methods based on cooperation had failed. The use of material weapons was impossible for a disarmed and emasculated race. But they had the traditions of a soul force in them kept alive through the ages from generation to generation. Was this not the only weapon available to them? Did it not possess the sanction of the past, and could it not be used in the sphere of politics? He was applying the ancient conception of Dharma, his heredity and his outlook made it impossible for him to believe in the compartmental view of life, which separates the sacred from the secular, and relegates God to the precincts of the Church, where he could be called to earth once a week by the music of the choir. He was viewing life as an organic whole in which the same law that operates in the individual operates as well in the life of the group in all its phases. For him therefore love as non violence was the only method of purifying the body of society, and he felt justified in vindicating the sacredness of the instrument that he was using by an appeal to results which are not foreign to the instrument, but the embodiment of the instrument in a larger universe. Love which often implies suffering for the individual blossoms forth as health and justice in the body politic. Was it not because he regarded the supreme realisation of a free India as the very final embodiment of the principle of Ahimsa that he appeared so often callous to his contemporaries with regard to the cost at which this was to be achieved? When the memory of the victims of Jallianwala Bagh was fresh in the minds of his countrymen he wrote "We must be prepared to contemplate with equanimity not

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a thousand murders of innocent men and women, but many thousands, before we attain a status in the world that shall not be surpassed by any nation " It was this very callousness that found expression in April 1934, when, after having led hundreds of thousands of believing souls to translate the gospel of love into the terms of political life, and made them struggle and suffer in and out of prison for nearly four years, he announced that the Civil Disobedience Movement had failed and that no one was to carry it on except himself For him there was not one law of truth and love for the individual and another for society If selfishness in the individual is the root of all evil and has to be fought against by a life of painful self discipline selfishness in Society was equally an evil to be fought against by the sufferings and sacrifice of its members Hindu society today has been paying the penalty of hundreds of centuries of oppression of some of their own fold by the rest ' So long as the Hindus regard untouchability as part of their religion Swaraj is impossible of attainment We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren, we have made them rub their noses we make them crawl on their bellies with eyes red with rage we push them out of railway compartments "

MR. ALFRED FDEN After listening to all that you say I am inclined for a moment to believe that Mr Gandhi has missed his vocation There is no place for a saint and seer in the hot and turbid regions of politics This moment aspect apart, you have more than once referred to Mr Gandhi's simplicity Does he not simplify life to the barest minimum? Has not India reduced her wants to the irreducible minimum already ?

MR. CHETAN Yes Gandhi is an ascetic and by his power of self-discipline he has so completely detached

himself from the influence of his environment that he can go about without the encumbrance of clothes and sleep under nature's roof, and content himself with goat's milk and fruit juice. But the majority of our people to day are living on the irreducible subsistence level. There is nothing in their daily lives that need simplification. When people live, as in India, below the margin of subsistence, the slightest shortage of food means starvation and death for thousands. The greatest immediate need of India is improvement in the material conditions of existence. It would not be quite correct to say that Gandhiji wants India to lower the present standard—simply because there is no standard, nothing that can be lowered. On the other hand he may be said, by his intense propaganda for Khaddar, to devote his energies to improving the economic condition of the masses. If he preaches simplification, and the desirability of not owning anything that is not absolutely necessary for our bodily wants, this appeal is directed to the inmates of his Satyagraha Ashram. His ideal of simplicity, which led him to regard it as a crime to spend money on dinner and marriage parties so long as millions of people are starving is the expression of his complete oneness with the sufferings and misery of the millions. It has never evoked sympathy from the intellectuals. It has perhaps made him forgetful of the inner springs of the human heart which seeks expression in pouring precious ointment on a precious head. An attitude of simplification may in the case of the masses in India involve the accentuation of the will to acquiesce in the present, a dull listlessness, content to live on without the discontent that points upwards to God. Life in its evolution has tended towards complexity, the difference between the savage and the civilised

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man is partly a difference in the nature of wants. What we need in India is an intensification of the will to live and raise the standard of life rather than a further simplification of life. It has also to be remembered that the moral power of poverty is to be measured by the psychological conditions it connotes and these have varied so widely at different times. The poverty of the earlier days resting on the simple conditions of living may have taken no thought of the morrow, the poverty of to-day is accompanied by ceaseless care and a harrowing sense of insecurity. The Franciscans of the Middle Ages could go about singing "take all that I can give away"—modern poverty has only one cry to utter, "give me more!" If simplification of life in India means, as it does today, living under a system which crushes life into listlessness if it does not sting into rage, one can well pause before accepting it as a message for the masses of India.

MR ALFRED EDEN. So you are prepared to admit that Mr Gandhi's attitude towards a life of simplicity is misconceived?

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you have slowly allowed yourselves to become the slaves of these standards, which have resulted in discontent instead of contentment?

MR ALFRED EDEN I see your point. But is not this simplification of life linked up in Mr Gandhi's philosophy with a wider issue—his entire attitude towards machinery and the paraphernalia of Western civilisation? Are you prepared to give me a rational explanation of this attitude?

MR CHETAN Gandhi, it must never be forgotten is the voice of the Rishis of old speaking to his generation of the glories of a past when her prosperity was founded on the use of the plough, when men had only to scratch the kindly ground to get all they wanted, and when in the leisure that this made possible they could acquire the art of living by discipline and self control and share in the eternal joy of the universe, the harmony and the rhythm of existence. He is therefore distressed at the intensive industrialisation in the West in which the use of machinery was attended with consequences that endangered the lives and morals of the very millions for whose benefit it was devised. Machinery has taken the money of millions of people, and concentrated its management and control into the hands of a few, and banking and credit institutions have accentuated the process of concentration. It has evolved tyranny, pride, greed, selfishness and ruthless competition on the one side, and loss of dignity and self respect on the other.

MR ALFRED EDEN Does this not mean that Mr Gandhi condemns the use of machinery and would have humanity return to the simple conditions of primitive life?

MR CHETAN No, on this question he is quite explicit. He said as early as 1924 "How can I be against all machinery when I know that even this body is a most delicate

piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine, a little tooth pick is a machine" What he objects to is the use which modern civilisation has made of machinery in the West. Men go on saving labour with the help of machines, till hundreds of thousands, nay millions are thrown out of work and die of starvation. He wants to save time and labour, not for the benefit of a few, but for all. "Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it is greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might." Though Gandhiji is not a socialist he would go to the length of suggesting a nationalisation of all factories that produce a machine like the Singer Sewing machine, the use of which would convert the work of the labourer from a mere drudgery into a work that makes for ease and comfort. He sees love at the back of the sewing machine and would universalise this principle in respect of all machinery. The machine must not be allowed to cripple the limbs of man, and he saw, curiously enough in a machine like the bicycle and the motor car things that do not satisfy the primary wants of man and which are therefore for him a hindrance rather than a help to the development of the soul.

MR ALFRED EDEY Can such a distinction as Mr Gandhi is drawing here admit of a defence?

MR CHETAN If one has to be logical there is no more reason for approving the use of the human hand or foot or a Singer Sewing Machine than there is for approving the use of a bicycle or a motor car. Gandhiji is fully alive to the implications of his attitude towards machinery. He says, "Ideally I would rule out all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable. The body itself is the purest piece of mecha-

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nism, but if it is a hindrance to the highest flights of the soul it has to be rejected." We have here the typical ascetic of the East consistently applying his logic to things of the phenomenal world where alone that logic can work, enabling him to weave his web of illusion from which the only way of escape would appear to lie in challenging the very claim of that logic to give us the Reality. But very often, as in his life so in his teachings, the ascetic gave way to the statesman who had to deal with the problems of a particular age. He was also a man of the world, who had to leave the clear light of the bright sun outside the cave for the partial gloom of the cave itself, where his countrymen were groping their way in the darkness of despair. "I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do at the present moment is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mills, save the millions we send out of India and distribute them in our cottages." Whatever hinders one's moral progress has to be destroyed. He tells us how at one time he threw a pair of beautiful field glasses into the sea because they were a source of irritation and misunderstanding between himself and a dear friend. He does not want to shut out English lever watches or beautiful Japanese lacquer work, but he would destroy all the choicest wines of Europe and all varieties of foreign cloth, because he considers them morally harmful. So on another occasion, "I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though I would certainly welcome their natural destruction. Neither railways nor hospitals are a test of a high and pure civilisation. At best they are a necessary evil. Nor am I aiming at a permanent destruction of law courts, much as I regard it as a con-



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summation devoutly to be wished for. Still less am I crying to destroy all machinery and mills. It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are to-day prepared for." Very much as non-cooperation is a temporary expedient paving the way to a new India of the future which could give her message of peace and goodwill to a groaning world, machinery is regarded by him as a temporary expedient which would help humanity to live that soul life which would make machinery superfluous.

MR. ALFRED EDEN: Do you agree with this view?

MR. CHETAN: No. Machinery economises human labour. Large scale production with the help of machinery releases human energy for the creative products of art and literature and for the blossoming of service and sacrifice. If in the West today machinery has degraded men to its own level, made work into a drudgery, and contributed effectively to the exploitation of the masses by the few, this has been a result of its employment in a socio-economic environment in which deliberate and purposive regulation and control by society are entirely absent, and in which laissez faire traditions have grown up out of the dissolution of the feudal institutions of an earlier age. We must not place to the discredit of machinery the incidental products of its use under a policy of drift. Wisely directed and socially controlled, the use of machinery has the promise in it of saving humanity from anxiety for the morrow by the abundance of wealth which it can produce for the satisfaction of human wants. And Gandhi endorses this view, however difficult it may be to reconcile it with some of his other utterances. "Machinery will become a help instead of becoming a hindrance," if it ceases to be the mere instrument of greed. If in the last resort it is the soul of man, (the wind that bloweth where it listeth)

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that has built up the triumphs of a mechanised civilisation in our times, let us also remember that machinery will find its true vocation again when by the leisure and freedom that it creates for the spirit of man, it fosters and promotes the fullness of human life

MR ALFRED EDEN So you accept the view that mechanisation, of course, on a planned basis, is essential for the material progress of your country as it is for all countries

MR CHETAN Certainly, we want mechanisation not only for the material development of our country, but as a means to a richer and fuller life

MR ALFRED EDEN I am glad that we are in agreement on this crucial point. But in agreeing with me, have you realised that mechanisation in the economic sphere has its implications for other aspects of life and may involve a radical change in the whole outlook and attitude to life of your countrymen?

MR CHETAN Assuming that our attitude to life is different from that of the West, I have no hesitation in accepting mechanisation with all its implications

MR ALFRED EDEN Is not your country to day dominated by religion? Have not your countrymen been dominated by religion throughout their history? I would be interested in knowing how far Mr Gandhi has been able to affect this dominant trait. Do not people still cling with the same tenacity to their religious beliefs? Or has there been a loosening of the grip of religion over the minds of the masses? Mr Gandhi's whole attitude to life is moulded by his religious inheritance, and his influence over the masses must mean a reaction in favour of the past and a strengthening of the religious motives. Religion, of course, has a double aspect, on the one hand it denotes

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the mass of institutional and organised life in the form of ritual and dogma and ceremonies, on the other hand it includes an appreciation of the values of life and their expression in life. Now in your country the social and economic organisation with the body of customs it involves is based upon religion, and these customs and the entire social structure have been felt to be hindrances rather than helps to life. They have become sacrosanct and it is regarded as a sacrilege to think of modifying them. Then again, the very purpose of life seems to be a negation of life.

MR CHETAN You are not wrong in your impression.

MR ALFRED EDEN Your religion has never put man in the centre of the universe. The main objective of your saints and teachers and philosophers seems to be detachment from the universe. The universe that surrounds us is *maya*, an appearance that deceives, the whole of human history is equally an illusion. There is no meaning or value in the time process. Still less is there any goodness in it. The religious life is a process of discipline, selfcontrol, a process of overcoming the domination of the senses and the intellect so that the soul can be freed from its bondage to matter and in meditation attain *moksha*. The earlier teachings of the Vedas which reflect a distinctly active, positive and optimistic note were subordinated by the pressure of the physical and the socio economic environment to this negative view which looks on birth as a penalty for crime or sin, and escape from the necessity of birth as the end of all existence. It may be that the rigid caste system which you built up in the course of time saved you from the violence of class conflicts and enabled you to survive through the ages under the most difficult surroundings. But your caste system by turning your

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society into rigid and water tight compartments has destroyed the feeling of unity and solidarity of the body politic, and made India an easy prey to foreign invasions and conquest. This perverse social system has deprived your society throughout the centuries of that inner organic vitality which enables a community to preserve its unity and resist all encroachments. Again this caste organisation as it exists to day involves the suppression of individuality and the negation of equality of opportunity, which though it may not exist in fact in the West gives us the spur to all effort and to life its value. Now, with this social and religious background, how are you going to adapt yourselves to the changing and changed conditions of your time?

MR CHETAN I admit the seriousness of the problem. To day in India what we have to battle with is not any definite concrete evil, but an entire atmosphere steeped in the past and charged with the spirit of conservatism and inertia. It is true that in the course of centuries our philosophic thought was permeated by a sense of the nothingness of life and a desire to escape from it. But the real Hindu attitude and outlook should not escape our attention, in these subsequent outgrowths. This attitude was positive, it was an attitude of longing for a full and abundant life, a life which involves the harmony of matter and spirit in a balanced and organic unity. The Gita emphasises this attitude: it is the gospel of action, incessant action without any regard to the fruit of action. Every one is to reach the fullness of his stature through his own efforts. Even when Hindu speculative thought talks of meditation it is a process of self realisation, the appropriation of the universe into one's life. If in the past our physical and political environment fostered an

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individual desire to escape from the cycle of lives by renouncing the world, we have enough of a healthy love for existence still left in us to create, out of the past and out of the new environment in which we find ourselves, a new social order. This social order shall be founded on the belief that earthly goods are not of the devil, that the gratification of our natural cravings is not necessarily fraught with sin and that an all round and full life for man whilst it seeks God and His Kingdom first has included in it the comforts of a material world which it has sanctified by subordination. This social order is to be based on social equality and recognition of the intrinsic worth of the individual.

MR ALFRED EDEN This may be your view. But Gandhiji who is now creating a new environment emphasises the nothingness of life and the vanity of the world. "We are not. He alone is." He calls himself an orthodox Hindu. He believes in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Puranas and therefore in the cycle of existence. He believes in Varnashram as a healthy division of work based on birth. He believes in cow protection. He considers marriage as a "fall," as a hindrance to the supreme object of life which is "Moksha", freedom from birth. Hindu culture and religion have had the greatest influence on his life, shaping his ideas and his attitude to the new environment in which he has found himself. His teaching is based upon the familiar Hindu sacred book. His speeches are replete with imagery and illustrations drawn from Hindu tradition and folklore. His fasts, his prayers, his vows and renunciations are all reminiscent of his ancestry. He is a Hindu expressing in his life the concentrated emotions and the mass thinking of the people amongst whom he was born. Except for his attitude towards

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untouchability, does not his influence work as a conservative force, emphasising your old world conceptions of the vanity of all life, the total negation of individuality, and the denial of that principle of equality of opportunity which rests on the recognition of the value of the individual?

MR CHETAN Yes, I agree that Gandhiji's teachings are based on Hindu religion and on the spirit of Hindu culture. He accepts the Gita as his gospel. He says that Hinduism as he knows it entirely satisfies his soul and fills his whole being. He finds solace in the Bhagwad Gita.

MR ALFRED EDEN If this is so does he not remain a strong conservative force in an India that is otherwise moving so rapidly? Is it not, for instance, a fact that he stands for celibacy as an ideal of salvation? I shall quote his own words. "The aim of human life is deliverance, is freedom from birth, by breaking the bonds of flesh, by becoming one with God. Now marriage is a hindrance in the attainment of this supreme object, inasmuch as it only tightens the bonds of flesh. What is the object generally understood of marriage except a repetition of one's own kind?' Mr Gandhi would regard the logical result of celibacy with equanimity, not the extinction of the human species, but the transference of it to a higher plane.

Or take again, in this connection, his views on the population problem. He considers it wrong under present conditions in India to bring forth children. He tells you "We only multiply slaves and wealings—not till India has become a free nation able to withstand avoidable starvation, well able to feed herself in times of famine, possessing the knowledge of how to deal with malaria and other epidemics, have we the right to bring forth progeny."

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He tells you to suspend procreation, but not by the immoral and artificial checks as he calls them that are resorted to in our days, but by a life of discipline and self control. What hope can your country entertain of shaking itself free from the incubus of the past, when the one great leader of your country who can electrify the masses into action stands up as the bulwark of social immobility by his stress on the heritage of the past?

MR CHETAN Let me face your difficulties. Ascetic as he is, we must not take Gandhiji's utterances in these matters as practical solutions recognising the totality of the situation. The ideal of celibacy which Gandhiji preaches is primarily intended for the inmates of his Ashram. He admits that for the vast majority of men marriage is a desirable and natural state, because it is a mode of restraint. If at times he went further and preached abstention as a mode of escape from birth and suffering, he was evidently expressing and working out the logical implications of his philosophical outlook, dominated as it was by Jain and Buddhist influences. It is equally obvious that one who was so deeply steeped in the ascetic traditions of Hinduism could never for a moment reconcile himself to the use of artificial and mechanical devices for checking the growth of population. It would have been equivalent to declaring the bankruptcy of self control as a method of salvation. But the coming tide cannot be checked by the fiat of a Canute.

But what you have not yet realised with regard to Gandhiji's influence is that whilst he is the very embodiment of the ancient spirit of Hindu culture speaking in terms of the past, he has also been a potent force in the direction of rationalism. He has virtually effected a revolution in the religious thinking of the masses, shaking

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them violently out of their unquestioning faith in the customs and institutions which surround them. He distinguishes between custom and religion. Custom is not religion, customs may change. He compares Hinduism to the Ganges pure and unsullied at its source, but taking in its course all the impurities that come in the way. The Shastras themselves have been ever growing. The Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas did not arise at one and the same time. Each grew out of the necessities of particular periods, and therefore they seem to conflict with one another. A practice that was good enough in one period would, if blindly followed in another, lead people into the "slough of despond." Because at one time he used to eat beef, shall we also do so now? Shall we chop off the hands and feet of thieves today, because this was the usage at one time? Hinduism does not consist in eating and non-eating. Its kernel consists in right conduct. Many a man, eating meat, but observing the cardinal virtues of compassion and truth, and living in the fear of God, is a better Hindu than a hypocrite who abstains today from meat. He sees the essence of the Hindu creed to lie in search after truth through non-violent means. If today Hinduism has become moribund, inactive, unresponsive to growth, the fault lies with the seekers who are fatigued, not with Hinduism itself.

MR ALFRED EDEN: You are making Mr. Gandhi a rationalist.

MR CHETAN: Yes. He does not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. His belief in the Hindu scripture does not require him to accept every word and verse as divinely inspired. He declines to be bound by any interpretation, however learned, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. He accepts, for example, the doctrine



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of Varnashram, but he repudiates the division into innumerable castes with which Hindu society is riddled today. A Brahman may remain a Brahman though he may dine with his Shudra brother, if he has not left off his duty of service by knowledge. He calls himself a reformer through and through. Hinduism for him is not an exclusive religion, there is room enough in it for the worship of all the prophets of the world.

MR ALFRED EDEN. How can you justify Mr Gandhi's defence of Varnashram? Is it not opposed to the basic principle of social equality and equality of opportunity?

MR CHETAN. I admit the force of your contention. This criticism of Varnashram implies a new social order which mechanisation has rendered possible. In Vedic times Varnashram in its present form did not exist. It was a subsequent growth. But discussion apart, I am not prepared to defend Varnashram.

MR ALFRED EDEN. But what about Mr Gandhi's attitude towards other social problems?

MR CHETAN. I shall take his views about child marriages in the first place. As a reformer Gandhi is definitely opposed to child marriage. If the text of the Smritis ordering child marriage be found to be authoritative we must reject it in the light of positive experience and scientific knowledge. He goes to the length of asserting that parents might stop training their boys and girls for a married life. He contrasts Indian conditions with those in England where there are more ecclebrates and spinsters engaged in the political life of the country than amongst us Indians. He advocates widow remarriage and regards the existence of girl widows as a blot on Hindu Society. The Shastras are to be regarded as authoritative so far as they agree with the principles of morality. It

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is irreligion, not religion, to give religious sanction to a brutal custom. Take in the next place the problem of untouchability. His work as a social reformer is pre-eminently to be discovered in his lifelong crusade against untouchability. Untouchability for him is a hydra-headed monster. The Shastras would be death traps if we were to regulate our conduct according to every detail given in them. He regards untouchability as a heinous crime against humanity. It has suppressed, as nothing else in Hinduism has, vast numbers of the human race who are not only as good as ourselves, but are rendering an essential service to the country. The sooner Hinduism purges itself of this sin, the better it is for itself. He would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. He would not deny God by denying to a fifth of the Hindu race the right of association on an equal footing. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow and preaches the preservation of noxious insects cannot possibly warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. Yudhishtira would not enter heaven without his dog. How can then the descendants of that Yudhishtira expect to obtain Swaraj without the untouchables?

Untouchability is for him a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism. For him that which was opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality could not be claimed as Shashtra. He had made this question his own by a life of ceaseless endeavour through example and preaching. When in 1932 the Prisoner of Yerwada proclaimed his historic fast, it was the supreme manifestation of service and sacrifice for the cause of Hinduism, a protest against the attempt at permanently dividing Hindu society by separate electorates for the depressed classes. The

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country as a whole was moved suddenly into a change of heart—twenty years work was concentrated into those few days; and when the fast was ended, it was followed by an intensive, uninterrupted propaganda for awakening the mass of the population into a sense of their responsibility towards the disinherited and the despised—so that the wounds of the Hindu society may be healed, and the country may through this act of self-purification be fitted to enter on a larger life.

MR. ALFRED EDEN. Is not Mr. Gandhi an enigma?

MR. CHETAN. Apparently, yes. Gandhiji may be regarded not only as a reformer, but as a revolutionary. He has awakened the millions of India to a sense of the dignity and worth of human life; he has liberated these millions from the yoke of a dead past which hitherto weighed them down. The inertia and apathy and the spirit of defeatism which were hitherto writ large on the face of Hindu society are now slowly disappearing. He has been instrumental by his teaching and influence in undermining the traditional reverence for customs and practices sanctified in the name of religion. Among the educated classes today the forces that have been at work are sufficiently strong to detach them from their moorings in the past. It was left for Gandhiji to shake the masses out of their slumber, to arouse in them a self-consciousness that on the one hand makes them legitimately proud of their past heritage but which on the other hand makes them critical of their past and gives them a sense of detachment which is so necessary for the introduction of rapid changes in the socio-economic structure of India. Indian society is already in ferment. There is a challenge offered on all sides to age-worn customs and institutions. The joint-family organisation is rapidly disappearing. The caste

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organisation is already shaken. The old village economy has disappeared under the stress of the new environment. The very institution of marriage is being intellectually challenged much as in the West. The echoes of this challenge find expression in vernacular drama and journalistic literature. Society seems to have left its moorings. What ultimate shape our social institutions may take it would be rashness to predict. We are already hearing piteous cries of religion in danger. We are confident that what is taking place in the history of contemporary India is not so much the total destruction of the springs of religion, as the questioning and the ferment of the soul that no longer accepts blindly the authority of the Shastras and of the past. It is the teething process through which the youthful soul of new India will adjust itself to the times, under the influence of modern science and social forces.

MR. ALFRED EDEN. What is your estimate of the value of Mr. Gandhi's economic programme which stresses the use of khaddar? Is he not putting back the hands of the clock by attempting to replace mill-made cloth and mill-spun yarn by handwoven and handspun yarn?

MR. CHETAN. Gandhiji is essentially a humanitarian. His whole economic programme is based on humanitarian considerations. He is struck with the appalling poverty of the masses. The claim that he advances on behalf of hand-spinning is that it alone offers an immediate practicable and permanent solution of the problem of problems that confronts India—namely the enforced idleness for nearly six months in the year of an overwhelming majority of the Indian population, owing to lack of suitable supplementary occupation, and the consequent chronic starvation of the masses. If these factors were not present, he would

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admit that there would be no place for the spinning wheel in the national life of India, with the comparatively small remuneration that can be derived from it. He often admits that he has no quarrels with the mills. India requires today 13 yards of cloth per head per year. She produces today less than half the amount. She grows all the cotton she needs, exports millions of bales to Japan and Lancashire and receives much of it back in piecegoods, although she is capable of producing all the cloth and all the yarn necessary for supplying her wants by handweaving and hand-spinning. Hand spinning was for ages a supplementary occupation of the agricultural classes. This national industry could now be revived without damaging the mill industry. Gandhiji regards this as an automatic solution of India's grinding poverty. It further constitutes a readymade insurance policy in times of scarcity of rain and of famine. He accordingly organised the All India Spinners' Association and the All India Village Industries Association. He induced the Indian National Congress to make the wearing of Khaddar a symbol and a condition of membership, and make it a part of the system of national education that was to take the place of the Western system of education.

MR ALFRED EDEN. But is it not almost absurd to suppose that the poverty of India can be solved by the introduction of hand-spinning and hand-weaving in an age of machinery and large scale production?

MR CHETAN. One has to admit that there may be nothing constructive in the economic programme of Gandhiji when one remembers that from the point of view of mechanical production on a large scale the world has passed through revolutionary changes. This age of machine technology is also an age in which scientific developments

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have annihilated distances and linked the world into a single economic unit. As an idealist dreaming of a perfect world, he ignores both these features of mass production of standard goods and of the whole world constituting a single market. He dreams of continuing the present methods of production and of making India an independent isolated, self subsistent, organism proud of its economic simplicity and a heaven of the mystic virtues which might one day prove the salvation of the rest of the world. But this apart, in understanding his programme for Khaddar there are one or two other things which have to be remembered. He points out that he does not intend hand spinning to be a calling like weaving and carpentry. He regards it essentially as a subsidiary occupation, and even two annas a day which is the daily wage earned by an average spinner promises a substantial addition to the income of an agricultural population living on a starvation level. In the second place he sees behind the spinning wheel the operation of love, unlike the use of machinery in large scale production in the West where he sees greed and the sacrifice of the human soul to profit seeking. He asks his countrymen to take to the spinning wheel as a penance, taking the name of Narayan as they spin—an acknowledgment of their corporate responsibility for social wrongs—the poverty and misery of the dumb millions who surround them. But he realised that the spinning wheel cannot compete with the machine loom. Foreign cloth must be kept out if hand spun and hand woven khaddar is to find a market. But as this was impossible to achieve by a tariff policy not entirely controlled by the Indian Legislature the only alternative left was a voluntary boycott of foreign cloth. Gandhiji gave a new vitality to the Swadeshi Movement. The cult of khaddar

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took a powerful hold upon the imagination of the country. Men and women all over the country took to khaddar as a symbol of love—the love of their country, behind which was the cult of Ahimsa, the pride of their ancient past, the glorious heritage of the East.

MR ALFRED EDEN But has not the enthusiasm for Khaddar abated, whatever the strength of the movement in the early months of the Civil Disobedience Movement?

MR CHETAN Yes. The enthusiasm has abated. Khaddar is unfortunately dear. Moreover there is the natural craving for finer and better things. For Gandhi, however, art was primarily the expression of truth, and the beauty of shapes and colours and outward forms had no appeal for him, divorced from earnestness of purpose and the sanctities of a pure, unsullied existence. Then again there is the competition from Japan and Lancashire and from the Indian Mills. Whilst one cannot help admitting the importance of the propaganda for Khaddar, and its place, even as a cottage industry, in the economic life of the country at the present stage of its economic development, one need not so far forget the realities of the machine age in which he is living as to believe that the economic salvation of India is to be found in the spread of the Khaddar cult.

MR ALFRED EDEN But taking Mr Gandhi's larger programme of rural reconstruction, do you see any greater hope for your country in accepting it?

MR CHETAN The object of such a programme, say as embodied in the All India Village Industries Association, is to revive the dying arts and crafts of the villagers. The causes that have brought about the decline and disappearance of these village crafts are not difficult to follow. Economic conditions have been radically altered in the

last hundred years. The village as an economic unit has disappeared. Transportation facilities have changed the face of the country, including the old economic order resting on custom and personal relationships between the producer and the consumer. It may be possible to put up a strong case for the revival of some of the arts and crafts on non-economic considerations—much as Ruskin and William Morris pleaded in reference to industrial conditions in the England of their times. The revival of such industries may satisfy the desire of those who wish to preserve and even to improve the traditional skill of the old Indian artists. But no nation can in the present century entertain the remotest hope of entering on a footing of equality into those inevitable relations of trade and commerce with other nations which scientific knowledge and technology have made possible without the use of machinery and large scale mass production. Industrialisation in the strict sense and large scale production do not necessarily involve capitalist exploitation of the masses or the degradation of humanity to the level of machinery. While Gandhiji preaches the importance of using hand ground rice instead of mill flour and of wearing hand-woven cloth, he is obviously identifying the employment of machinery with the accompaniments that have been associated with it till now in the West. Can we not be permitted to hope that with the acquisition of political power Indian leaders and statesmen who will be responsible for the future progress of our country will plan out the economic life of the country so as to combine the benefits of large scale production with a scheme of distribution which will prevent the worst features of a planless capitalist organisation? If the tragedy of the present situation is the repetition in India of the mid Victorian capitalist mistakes under



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the impact of Western ideas and Western institutions, may we not hope to lay the foundations of a new social order, when in attempting this work we have available to our hands the idealism and reverence for values which Gandhiji has kept alive in the masses of our population and likewise the valuable experience of Soviet Russia?

MR ALFRED EDEN We are in entire agreement on this point. May I ask another question? Apart from his economic programme to what extent has Gandhiji contributed to the growth of national self-consciousness?

MR CHETAN Yes, Gandhiji has contributed substantially. With his characteristic foresight, he realises that India must have one universal language if she is to evolve into a nation. To day with a population of 350 millions it is difficult for a man from one province to go to another province where he could make himself easily intelligible by the use of his provincial dialect. English can never be the common medium of communication for the masses of the country. Whatever role it has played in the development of the political life of the country its use will be restricted to the few who have had the benefits of a liberal education. Gandhiji insists that every Indian should have a working knowledge of Hindi. The only language which can acquire the status of an all India language is Hindi or Hindustani. Only for the Bengalis and the Madrasis there is difficulty in adapting themselves to Hindi immediately, but a strong and well organised movement is already on foot in all provinces for teaching Hindi in primary schools. There is an organisation for the spread of Hindi with its branches spread all over the country, and it works under the direct patronage of Gandhiji. The adoption of Hindi or Hindustani, apart from the question of script, will also cement Hindu Muslim

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unity The importance of English can never be overlooked but it is evident that India as a nation will require a medium of national self expression and this can only be one of the Indian languages most of which are off shoots of Sanskrit with its associations of the ancient culture and civilisation of India Gandhiji, whilst he pleads for Hindi as the universal language of India, is fully alive to the possibilities which underlie the development of the various languages A new literature is rapidly coming into existence in Gujarati, Marathi, Urdu and above all Bengalee, It is the reflection of the new awakening that is taking place in the mind of the country New songs of a patriotic character are spontaneously composed in these Indian dialects, history, art, painting, architecture and music of recent times bear witness to the soul of India interpreting its new life and experiences through these various channels of expression Even fashions in clothes and in the art of dressing both of men and women witness to this quickening sense of beauty which is building its expression on the background of the past

MR ALFRED EDEN There appears to be a renaissance in your country?

MR CHETAN Yes In this renaissance which we have the privilege to witness one feels that Indian womanhood will play a vital part The Hindu attitude towards women has always been an attitude of respect and affection, but the social institutions of the last few centuries were instrumental in suppressing their individuality and even in the denial of some of their elementary rights In Northern India the Purdah system cut off the women from society, dwarfing their mind and ruining their physique The non cooperation movement has brought about an almost revolutionary change in the social and economic

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status of the women of India. Women who in normal times would never have thought of stirring out of their houses joined in thousands the non-cooperation movement at the call of Gandhiji. Hundreds of them daily picketted the shops, bore the brunt of lathi charges, faced insults and kicks in the bigger cities throughout the country. In the early days of the non-cooperation movement it was a sight worth a lifetime—a never ending procession of women proceeding to the seashore with a small *lota* in their hands for the manufacture of salt in defiance of the law. Hundreds of them went to jail sharing all the hardships of prison life with their male companions. Gandhiji's appeal to the women of India was met by a spirit of sacrifice and service on their part manifested in their readiness to subordinate their home and their families to the cause of their country. So far as the emancipation of Indian womanhood is concerned the non-cooperation movement has been a providential instrument, and we may rest assured that in the new India of the future women will take their part side by side with men in making whatever contribution it will be the privilege of India to make to world civilisation.

MR ALFRED EDEN: This is very cheering. But is not Mr Gandhi's political work a huge failure?

MR CHETAN: Let me restate my estimate of it. I have already indicated to you the sources of his hold over the masses. Brought up in the traditions of a philosophy of love and non-violence, he had the benefit of a Western education in the West. He was a convinced believer in the superiority of British political institutions and during the war of 1914 he appealed to his countrymen to offer their sons as a sacrifice to the Empire. And yet a few years later he was the leader of the non-cooperation movement.

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which has, more than anything else, shaken to its foundations the prestige of the British Government. Convinced as he was of the value of the British connection, he thought he would be instrumental in making the rulers revise their policy and confer voluntarily the gift of freedom on India. When the Rowlatt Act brought him the conviction that constitutional agitation for freedom was a vain hope, that the only reward for the sacrifices that India had made during the war was the passing of legislation that involved the denial of some of the elementary rights of man, there were two alternatives open to him for the winning of India's freedom,—force and non violence. Force was incompatible with his whole philosophy of life. He might also have perceived the futility from a practical point of view of the use of force by disarmed people. He therefore resorted to the weapon that he had already tried in South Africa, and which belonged to the very genius and heredity of the people, a weapon which they had used for centuries, namely, the vindication of truth not by the infliction of suffering upon one's opponents, but on one's self. In the political field the struggle consists in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws, by suffering in your own person the penalties of a breach of the laws. Gandhiji knew the value of this non-violent movement for a people like his own countrymen. The British had the weapons of war and the Indians did not possess them. The only hope of India attaining her end was to keep the struggle with the British on the plane where Indians have a weapon—the weapon of non-violent resistance, the use of soul force against physical force. He realised that the strength that ultimately wins is the strength not of force, but of cooperative will, the strength of the spirit. He knew that what keeps together and constitutes, for example, the efficiency of a modern

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army or navy is not the possession of the machine gun or the bomb or the torpedo, or the aeroplane, but the will, the consenting cooperative will of numbers, the power of masses of men to subordinate their will by discipline and sacrifice to the corporate will, which is the ultimate sanction behind the state. But whereas the discipline and subordination in the army or navy are apt to be mechanical and imposed from without, the discipline and sacrifice in terms of which Gandhiji was speaking and which he asked of his followers were a voluntary self imposed discipline and sacrifice. This discipline was to free men from the bondage of fear into the life of love. It was the dynamic force which the Rishis in this ancient land had discovered in the ages past, those who had discovered it were greater geniuses than Newton and greater warriors than Napoleon. Having known the use of arms and realised their uselessness, they had taught the weary world that its salvation did not lie through aggressive violence.

MR ALFRED EDEN But was not Mr Gandhi himself compelled to acknowledge the failure of this instrument of non violence in a violent world? Did he not call it an Himalayan blunder after the Chauri Chaura incident? Did he not suspend it in 1931, and again in 1934? Has he not publicly confessed that no one is fit enough to carry on the non violent campaign and that he reserved to himself alone the right to resume it?

MR CHITRAJ You are right. From the point of view of immediate results one may think that the movement has been a failure. But was it non violence or love that failed? What was lacking was the confidence and faith on the part of a great many of his followers who failed to adhere to the principles of non violence. The conditions necessary for a mass movement of Civil Disobedience were

not present. The success of the movement depended entirely on the extent to which the masses were prepared to accept its postulates, to risk their lives and to lose their all in order to regain their lives.

MR ALFRED EDEN That is exactly what I am stating. You cannot expect people to join the movement in large numbers. It was bound to fail.

MR CHETAN But there were thousands whom he converted to his creed. There is nothing parallel to it in the whole history of humanity. These thousands broke the laws, suffered and went to jail, only to emerge physical wrecks with their spirits depressed.

MR ALFRED EDEN Is this not an acknowledgment of the failure of the movement?

MR CHETAN No. The thoroughness with which the movement was suppressed by the bureaucratic machine could not break the vitality of the spirit that inspired it. You might keep it down, you might repress every outward expression of it by imprisoning the bodies of its votaries and torturing them. But the soul once kindled and touched cannot be extinguished and killed by the employment of such methods. Repressed instincts find sometimes a violent outlet in the case of the individual; and group instincts when thus repressed may have strange and violent reactions on the future history of the body politic.

MR ALFRED EDEN Let me put my difficulty more succinctly. Non-violent non-cooperation was started by Mr. Gandhi with the object of converting the Rulers, producing a change of heart which would lead to cooperation between Rulers and ruled in India and to the grant by mutual consent of a freedom which could otherwise only be obtained by force. You know what has actually

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happened as the result of this attempt. If the Rulers with whom he was dealing had been brought up in the outlook and traditions of the East, if their environment had made them value the things of the spirit as the East values them, if their social structure had been built on a basis of mutual service and sacrifice subordinating the aggressive-acquisitive competitive, fighting self to the group life, if the memories of that culture had been kept alive amongst them through a succession of yogis, who despised the self and the tawdry glories of the finite world as *maya*, we might have been justified in looking forward with confidence to the success of the non violent movement. Please remember I am not sitting in judgment upon the contrasted attitude of the East and the West. I am only feeling that Mr. Gandhi blundered in his judgment about the nature of the Rulers with whom he was dealing. His intense belief in the efficacy of the weapon that he was using betrays his ignorance of the fundamental fact that the foundations of the British rule are largely economic. He is not a realist in politics. He ignores the trend of world politics—with which I am in daily touch in our own days when selfish nations raise tariff walls and build up armaments with the talk of disarmament on their lips. As an idealist I share Mr. Gandhi's outlook, but my experience has driven me to a different conclusion.

MR. CHETAN But surely Gandhi was alive to the selfishness embodied in modern nationalism. If he fights for Swaraj he says, it is not because Swaraj is our ultimate goal. "Our battle is a spiritual battle." "We, the miserable outcastes of the orient, we must conquer freedom for all humanity." His interest in India's freedom would cease if she adopted violent means. "For me," he says,

"patriotism is the same as humanity" Imperialism has no place in his scheme of life

MR ALFRED EDEN But that is exactly my point. He allowed his humanitarian feelings and his gospel of non violence to run away with him In times of peace the social reality which we call a nation is too vague to create a vivid impression upon our minds But in times of crisis, wherever our nation is in conflict with other nations, it becomes a tangible reality It ceases to be one society amongst others, by claiming universality for its values It then prides itself that it is fighting for civilisation and culture Even in times of peace there are patent reactions of this selfrighteous pride Most of the treaties, for instance, by which European nations had divided the spoils of empire may be taken as textbooks in hypocrisy The appropriation of the Philippines by a government that prided itself on its absence of imperialistic ambitions was defended in sanctimonious terms as a new responsibility and duty cast on a great country, on whose growth and career the Ruler of Nations "has plainly written the high command and pledge of civilisation" The Imperialism that underlies the rule of Britain in India, has been characterised as a trusteeship which providence has conferred upon her for the protection of the life and liberty of the dumb millions of India The fact of the matter is that our group relations as nations have never been as moral as those which characterize our relations as individuals Nations are too selfish and morally obtuse to make the attainment of justice and righteousness possible by an appeal to love and the nobler instincts of humanity. The selfishness of human society must be regarded as an inevitability, and history bears ample witness in the past to the failure of every effort to transfer moral principles



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to group relations. The occupation of Abyssinia by Italy is an apt illustration. Mr. Gandhi as the heir to the Hindu conception of Dharma dreamt of moralising politics, and converting our political relations into duties towards God. He lost sight of the fact that the spirit of the Christian Church for example was the spirit of defeatism,—that at one time it accepted slavery, inequality of wealth and war as ordained by the “natural law” which a Merciful God had devised for man’s fallen condition. He failed to recognise that the collective enterprises of men belonged to the order of nature much more than to the order of reason and morality. What other result can follow from such ignoring of the forces at work in the world today except failure and defeat?

[At this stage of the argument Mr. Sushil who was listening to the conversation interposed.]

Mr. Sushil is a middle aged Professor of Sanskrit in one of the Colleges, well versed in the Shastras and Vedic lore. He is a great admirer of India’s cultural and spiritual heritage. His mind is moulded by his reading which is mostly confined to Sanskrit literature. He believes in the efficacy of soul force as he is fully acquainted with the efficacy of Yoga in Indian problems. His outlook is influenced by the lives and teachings of the ancient Rishis and also by the life and work of Swami Vivekananda. He is also under the influence of Shri Aurobindo Ghose.

MR. SUSHIL. Defeat? Failure? Anyone who has followed the history of the non-cooperation movement during the last ten years will bear witness to the success and efficacy of the weapon of non-violence in India. It is impossible for the Government to carry out its normal functions without the consent of the people. Gandhiji’s is a great reliefment. This weapon of non-violence

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will be used on a larger scale in the future. Because of this weapon I see for India a splendid opportunity in the years to come. She will play a great part in world politics. She is experimenting in love on a scale almost unparalleled in the history of mankind. And later generations when they see the triumph of love will worship the man whom a civilised Government to day regards as a mystic misplaced in politics.

MR CHETAN [*For the moment addressing Mr Sushil*]  
My dear friend, I admire your optimism. But why refuse to recognise reality? It is a fact that the non violent movement was definitely at an end by 1934. The followers of Gandhiji could not sustain in themselves the enthusiasm and earnestness of purpose which the movement demanded. It is no use telling me that Government rests on the consent of the governed. You have in mind an ideal state and government. Face facts squarely. Great Britain's rule in India is essentially a function of her commercial interests. The sovereignty of Parliament is the sovereignty of the interests of capitalism, and so long as the British Government exists to protect the principles of capitalism, the sacrifice of thousands of Gandhiji's followers in this great enterprise of love will not win from it the freedom for which India longs.

MR ALFRED EDEN Is it your conviction that the problem of India will never be solved by negotiation? Does realism in politics involve a spirit of defeatism and failure? If reason fails and the appeal to non violence is a Quixotic attempt at tilting with windmills, what is left except force?

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*Mr Surendra is forty five years old, brought up in a well to do family in Bombay. He can write and read Gujarati which is his mother tongue with difficulty. His higher education was completed in an English University. He believes that British Rule has conferred immense benefits on India, and that India will achieve all that she need achieve under the British and as a part of the British Empire. By temperament and conviction he is a liberal. He has a large stake in the country and he is immensely perturbed by the national movement under Gandhiji.*

MR SURENDRA [addressing Chetan] Yes. You are so enthusiastic about the teachings and achievements of Gandhiji. But you have allowed your enthusiasm to get the better of your judgment. Before Gandhiji came on the scene, India was slowly but steadily organising its political forces. The early attempts of the Indian National Congress had received an impetus in the agitation that followed the partition of Bengal. Leaders like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Dinshaw Vachha and Sir Surendranath Banerjee were succeeded by men of a more advanced stamp like B. G. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai. The war intensified the momentum of political awakening and history would have repeated in India the tale of freedom forced from a reluctant master partly by threats partly by coaxing, partly by the conflict of a revolutionary movement gathering strength as it acquired confidence. It was at this stage that Gandhiji stepped in, and diverted the movement into a different channel. For an emasculated race it is easy to follow the line of least resistance, and the non-violent movement was admirably suited to the genius of a race which has lost all vitality.

MR CHETAN But it seems you were not here when I was explaining the fortunes of the movement and its

underlying spirit

MR SURENDRA I know all about it I was in Bombay all those years Both in 1930 and 1934 the movement fizzled out It was a temporary fermentation which subsided as rapidly as it arose It was an emotional wave which temporarily caught the minds of a tired and exhausted race It was nothing short of child-like simplicity to believe that Swaraj could be achieved within six months by hand spinning and hand weaving The whole programme of Gandhiji was suited to the imagination of an immature generation brought up in the world of Hindu Mythology He is a Mahatma, not a practical politician His movement has retarded the political evolution of India The net result of these four years of the non cooperation struggle is disappointment and disillusionment He is responsible for intensifying the Hindu Moslem problem by first flattering and patting the Mussalmans He is also responsible for alienating the feelings of the depressed classes by taking an obstinate and unpractical attitude He has certainly aroused the people but he has failed to make use of the power that he has generated in the mass mind

MR CHETAN You seem to be hardly fair when you imply that Gandhiji's work has been of a purely negative character!

MR SURENDRA What else is it? Gandhiji has destroyed respect and reverence for institutions and for elders The spirit of disobedience is abroad Families have been broken up, fathers and sons husbands and wives, mothers and daughters have quarrelled all in the name of Gandhiji He had been indirectly instrumental in ruining the lives of some of the finest bodies of agriculturists in India—the cultivators of Bardoli Thousands of these people sacrificed everything they had in the no tax campaign They

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have now become landless and wanderers in the land of poverty. He has created a spirit of defiance amongst the workers and the tenants and in the population generally, habituating them to a lawless attitude in all the relations of life. Worse than all these was his appeal to the students to boycott Government Institutions. The teachers who left the schools are now destitutes. The students have flocked back to the schools in despair and disillusioned. The national schools which were organised for the benefit of these students soon disappeared on account of lack of funds. Whilst he is frantically opposing the use of machinery, new factories are springing up all over the country. The telephone and the bus and the automobile are revolutionising the face of the country. And Gandhiji asks India to believe that freedom will be obtained by the pursuit of his primitive methods, by a return to the spinning wheel and the bullock-cart and by a policy of negation. Such an appeal can only be made in a country like India where commonsense is in danger of departing with the absence of the means of living. In 1930 India should have accepted what she was offered, and should have economised her reserves of energy for the greater demands of the future. Instead, under the guidance of Gandhiji she pitched her demands so high that no reasonable man could have expected Great Britain to yield. If her demands had been granted, could India have held her own with no adequate army, no ammunition factories, not a single ship, and with her people torn by internal dissensions? Is not the talk about independence too absurd for words?

MR. CHETAN. You are now passing from argument to abuse.

MR. NURENDRA. Abuse? No. I am sorry if I am irritating you. But bear with me for a moment. The

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outstanding feature of the history of India is the meekness of its teeming population. It is this meekness and the dreaminess of our people that are responsible for the ease with which they have become a helpless prey to foreign invaders, including the latest of them, the white people. This spirit of docility has permeated the whole social structure of our country which is based on oppression, inequality and injustice. It has lulled our people into unquestioning acquiescence and apathy. In a race like ours the gospel of offering the right cheek to whoever strikes you on the left is misconceived and misplaced. We are an unmanly people. The doctrine of Ahimsa has intensified our unmanliness. It has made of us sneaking and snivelling cowards. Instead of overcoming our difficulties and endeavouring to dominate the situation by aggressive efforts, we are being told to revere the ideals of suffering and submission and sacrifice. Gandhiji is essentially a reactionary. Intellectually there is nothing great about him. As an individual he may think of attaining salvation by his methods, but for the collective salvation of India these methods are ill conceived and futile. Look for a moment at his Khaddar programme. He made a fetish of Khaddar. But with all the drive of his personality behind it, it has not effectively caught on, and now one can perceive a visible subsidence of the wave of swadeshi emotionalism. Strangely enough he has now directed his attention from Khaddar to other village industries. He refuses to be defeated. The most remarkable thing about him is that he refuses to see what he does not want to see,—and this is the secret of his tenacity. Politics has never been a field for saints. Political victory can only be won by political methods. Gandhiji may one day end his life by fasts. He may save his soul without saving

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his country There is no room for reason in a philosophy like Gandhiji's If the people of India could only continue the traditions of agitation through the constitutional channels that are open to them they might yet find that, though Home Rule cannot come overnight it cannot be long delayed The traditions of love of liberty and fair play so deeply rooted in the English character may come to their help bringing closer the freedom for which Gandhiji has been struggling in vain for all these years

MR CHETAN I wish I could share your optimism I am fully prepared to believe that the world on the brink of ruin and suicide will be ultimately forced into the methods of cooperation and will listen to reason I am even prepared to concede that a Britain faced with the never-ceasing necessity of suppressing the spirit of rebellion in India overburdened with taxes and threats of war nearer home with the prospect of losing her markets in Asia, may be led in a spirit of conciliation to retain the friendship and loyalty of India by the offer of Home Rule But today a world intoxicated with a sense of power, and not as yet realising the gravity of the forces of destruction that threaten it a world inspired by a spirit of revenge and anxious to preserve the ill gotten gains of the last war is not prepared to listen to reason A peaceful solution of India's problem such as Gandhiji wishes for is only possible if reason prevails If one has followed with any attention the debates in Parliament on India the attitude of the die hards and the conservatives the anxiety of capitalism to safeguard its interests in India with a thousand million pounds of British capital invested in various forms in our country it is difficult to visualize the prospects in the immediate future of a peaceful solution of India's problem Men habituated to power and privi

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leges will fight desperately to defend their rights at any cost. But why should we deliberately shut our eyes to the weaknesses of human nature? We are told that we Indians are temperamentally dreamy and mystic. If I were to believe that India would immediately get her freedom as a result of Gandhiji's movement, I would confirm the opinion of Englishmen about our racial temperament. Having regard to the trend of world events during recent years, one has to reluctantly admit that India will do what the rest of the world has done in the attempt to win its freedom. Already in India there is a growing section of the people who refuse to believe in the non-violent creed of Gandhiji and who are growing impatient with his medieval programme. Jawaharlal Nehru has for the time being consented to experiment in love in the company of Gandhiji. He is the hero of the younger generation. He has already become the leader of the Socialist group bent on working out its end by its own methods. He has openly professed that he would have evolution without violence if possible, but with violence if necessary. The younger generation at one time so ardently ready to sacrifice its all under the leadership of Gandhiji has now been disillusioned. They are restive and rebellious at the treatment they have received at the hands of their elders, who have used them in times when they needed their services and thrown them overboard when their opportunism dictated a change in tactics. The only alternative before the country according to them, if Gandhiji's movement failed is the adoption of the tactics of rebellion, based on methods of force and attended by ruthless repression and suffering. To day Gandhiji is the only great barrier between the *British Rulers and the forces of hatred and resentment* that are working underground—between on



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at Geneva a machinery for negotiation and peaceful settlement of disputes, for the ventilation of the grievances of oppressed minorities, for cooperation on all questions connected with our material welfare and economic prosperity. Even on the purely selfish basis of enlightened self-interest the only policy which prudence can dictate to Great Britain is to link India to herself by ties of permanent friendship. It may be that over a hundred years in the past Britain has brought neither adequate health nor prosperity to India. But her instincts of statesmanship should now convince her that her greatness and prosperity depend not upon the retention of India in dependence, but upon her ability to relinquish her hold for the cementing of closer ties between equals. A contented India means an assured market for Great Britain for years to come. India's needs are growing and even if she develops her own industries, every addition to the income of the population of India which is one fifth of the total population of the world, will mean additional purchasing power and increased opportunity for the absorption of British goods. With a friendly India developing her own industries there would be immense possibilities for British imports to India of machinery, shipbuilding materials, tractors and agricultural machinery. The future of British investments and British trade in India will largely depend on the extent to which Britain is willing to meet the claims of Indian nationalism. Does it not therefore appear that the only method of solving the problem of India lies in the appeal to reason?

MR CHETAN I am not less anxious than you are for a solution of our problems by the method of reason and love. Such a solution is mutually beneficial, but even Gandhiji does not count on an easy victory for love. Even

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Gandhiji knows that devils cannot be cast out of a sinning world except by much fasting and prayer. He does not however adequately realise that, whereas the climatic conditions of India, the poverty of the people and centuries of ascetic discipline have facilitated a process of control of physical forces and the will to live, the white races, on the other hand, are not easily tamed and disciplined, that the physical and the social environment of the white races has led to a survival of force in them that will not yield to the allurements of love, or melt at the sight of suffering. Gandhiji has extended the power of the soul force over the collective life of man, as far as it can be extended at any time under unfavourable circumstances. This is his legitimate claim to greatness in the history of India and in the history of the world. But today in the political field we have the soul of India symbolised in Gandhiji face to face with the soul of Britain symbolised in a Winston Churchill. The saint and cynic, the representative of the dreaming Fast and the realist exponent of imperialism, the frail world weary, tortured soul and the organised disciplined might of Britain stand confronting one another. Who can doubt the result? And yet the result may not be a cause for despair for a war weary humanity. May it not be that the failure and sufferings of the non-cooperation movement were the inevitable repercussions on the followers of the movement of the crystallised institutions of a civilisation that subordinates the spiritual to the material in the race for armaments, in the erection of tariff walls, in the economic exploitation of the so called backward races by those that were highly industrialised and economically developed? If to day the whole of humanity is becoming an increasingly organised unit,

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through scientific discoveries, international commerce and the free interchange of ideas and ideals, is it unnatural to find that the shortcomings of one part of humanity must in a moral universe work out their consequences in the multiplicity of sufferings in which all are involved? Does not god send his rain on the just and on the unjust? And if the rain with its beneficence and abundance, why not the earthquake with its loss of lives?

MR ALFRED EDEN Is this the only claim that you can make for Gandhi's greatness? I thought yours was a broader plea than this in the vindication of his uniqueness in history

MR CHETAN Why do you misunderstand me? Here is a unique personality in history. Gandhi himself is clear about what he desires to achieve. In 1932 during his fast he clearly stated, "Those who have to bring about radical changes in human conditions and surroundings cannot do it except by raising a ferment in society. There are only two methods of doing this—violent and non-violent." He prefers the non violent method, as it is so pre eminently suited to his philosophy of life and temperament. With the weapon of non violence which he found embedded in the life and blood of the people he worked for a great national revival. He realised the difficulties in the way of full attainment of freedom for India in the immediate future. Before he started on his famous Dandi March in 1930 he stated explicitly that the movement was launched to generate a power which would enable India to achieve Swaraj. In creating this power, this new consciousness resting ultimately on a faith in the providential direction of human affairs his achievement has been a marvellous success. He is fully conscious of the fact that his countrymen have lost all confidence in them

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selves, that the morale of the nation has been undermined, that Indian Society has become stagnant and that institutional religion has produced a mental paralysis. He believes that no nation can be free unless it is purified and reformed from within. He is not in haste. He desires to lay the solid foundations of a New India as a nation, as an organ of regenerated mankind animated by the principles of mutual service and love. With that end in view he is working for the creation of a new environment—social, economic, mental and religious—in which a new social order may be brought into existence and may function on a basis of justice and equity, enabling each human soul to realise the fullness of life. In evaluating his work we need a historical perspective—and we are too close to the beginnings of his work to obtain that perspective. It will be for a future generation to arrive at a proper estimate of the great life work of Gandhiji in the evolution of India as a nation.

In the meantime let us look at his life work a little more in detail. He has arrested the process of destruction of our ancient heritage and culture. He looks with alarm upon the processes of Western civilisation with the pursuit of material goods, with its mechanism for the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few which increases unemployment and poverty, and even when it makes leisure possible for the few makes these few unfit for the profitable enjoyment of their leisure. He wants to rescue the rising generation from the de-Hinduising and de-nationalising processes which are making them forgetful of their great past. He has been working for the growth of a new nation in India, creating and quickening the desire for freedom in the masses. He has aroused them from their apathy and slumber. He has taught them no longer to fear their

**Rulers** He has generated a ferment in the soil of India which will in the course of time evolve into a collective life of vigour and beauty. There has been under his influence what one may call a sudden manifestation of the upward urge of life in the group phase. He has delivered hammer strokes against the stronghold of the conservative elements of Hindu Society which now shows signs of crumbling. By his intense crusade against untouchability he has shaken the foundations of Hindu orthodoxy and liberated the Hindu mind from the yoke of authority and blind submission to the past. By his advocacy of khaddar and the revival of village industries in general he has aroused the hopes of a poverty-stricken population for a happy and healthy life. He has brought about a revolutionary change in the life of the women of India, emancipating them from the bondage of ages, dragging them out of their confinement into the free life of service, the equal companions of men in the struggle for freedom. No single individual in the world has during his lifetime achieved such wonderful results. He is not to be judged by what he has actually achieved, but by the possibilities of achievement which he has opened out to his country. The seeds that he has sown will fructify in the years to come bearing increasing witness to the greatness of his personality.

It may be that a portion of his teaching may not be of permanent value to India and to humanity, and will not be embodied in the new life that is evolving in India. His economics is primitive—the dream of a medieval saint who thinks of achieving greatness for his country by stepping out of the industrialising current of the world, returning to the simple conditions of the old days with the spinning wheel, at a time when mass

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production is the order of the day. His philosophy of life is too ascetic and has been determined by the nature of the work to which he found himself called. It is couched in terms of freedom from the necessity of birth which involves sin and suffering. His politics is affected by his mysticism. His belief in soul force and his weapon of non violence may be misplaced and irrelevant in a universe that only respects guns. From an immediate point of view he may have failed in achieving India's freedom. His attitude towards the Princes and the landlords and the propertied classes is only a reflection of the optimism that mysticism inspires. He could not have succeeded, given the environment in which he worked. It is true that there has been a reaction against his teaching. But let not the presence of this reaction cloud our judgment about the permanent value of Gandhi's lifework. He has quickened the millions of India into a new life, his asceticism has been tempered by a sense of the material woes of his generation. Satyagraha has in his hands become a potent instrument of social and political reform achieving in a few years a transformation of the entire outlook of a people which normally would have been spread over decades. And when in later times the accidents and irrelevancies of the present float out of the vision, permitting us to see unclouded the results of his work Gandhi will be regarded not only as the great saint and seer but also as the great statesman of his age, who laid the foundations of the new India of the future, converting a listless and apathetic humanity into a unified nation, proud of its past, prepared for danger and responsibility, aroused into a sense of shame for the social wrongs embodied in child marriage and caste organisation and untouchability, chastened by their sufferings to be the bearers of a new nationalist dream.

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**Compiled by R. K. PRABHU.**